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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 003373

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLES PROCESS IN  
COLOMBIA: DRAFT WORK PLAN UNDER DEVELOPMENT

REF: 03 BOGOTA 9054

This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

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Summary  
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1. (SBU) British Petroleum (BP) and the Colombian Association of Petroleum Producers (ACP) hosted a briefing for British and U.S. emboffs on ACP's draft work plan regarding the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs) for the extractive industry. ACP and BP requested USG and UK assistance encouraging relevant GOC agencies to participate in the implementation of the plan. Specifically, they are interested in securing GOC cooperation to vet privately-contracted security teams and public security forces contracted via Ecopetrol by the extractive companies. ACP's work plan anticipates an industry-wide workshop in April aimed at developing a baseline consensus among producers as well as a series of regional workshops with local law enforcement and military to bring the GOC onboard. Emboffs expressed concern that the work plan seemed to come up short on civil society involvement and encouraged ACP to consider efforts to solicit input from labor organizations and NGOs before final agreement on an industry-wide baseline position. End Summary.

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Context  
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2. (U) Since the initial VP meeting hosted by the U.S. Embassy in September 2003 (reftel), ACP held a series of one-day workshops in November 2003 with its members to develop a draft work plan on VPs. The draft work plan integrates topics such as corporate responsibility, transparency of revenue distribution, risk assessment, best practices, ethical principles, human rights and social management in hopes of developing a consensus on minimum baseline standards that would govern the business practices of ACP members. The workshops consisted of presentations from companies that currently support VP, including BP, Occidental Petroleum (OXY) and ChevronTexaco; discussion of the U.N. Global Compact; and consideration of an OXY case study on pending lawsuits alleging OXY's involvement in the 1998 Santo Domingo massacre (septel).

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Draft Work Plan: Civil Society Participation Later  
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3. (SBU) Based on the September meeting and the November workshops, ACP and BP have designed a draft work plan that focuses on using best practices and development of an intra-industry information sharing network that would facilitate risk assessment procedures. ACP plans to host a two-day workshop in April to present the draft work plan and to formulate a set of baseline standards for implementation of VPs. Beginning in April, ACP also intends to host a series of eleven regional workshops with local law enforcement and public security forces to develop an infrastructure for cooperation. In response to emboffs' concerns that the draft work plan did not seem to integrate input from civil society -- primarily labor organizations and human rights NGOs -- ACP and BP noted that the high degree of mistrust between the private sector and civil society precluded the inclusion of civil society representatives in initial discussions. Noting our concern that NGOs and organized labor might be disinclined to participate as a result of being excluded from the formulation process, ACP and BP insisted they will reach out to NGOs and organized labor only after ACP's membership has agreed on a set of baseline standards. BP noted that they would enlist the support of U.K.- and U.S.-based human rights organizations in reaching out to Colombian organized labor and NGOs.

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GOC Assistance Needed  
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4. (SBU) ACP and BP stated that industries can accomplish 80

percent of work plan implementation alone. The remaining 20 percent will require GOC assistance in order to obtain necessary information to conduct environmental, security and other risk assessment studies and to vet privately-contracted security companies and public security forces contracted by Ecopetrol, which traditionally receives logistical or financial support from extractive producers. ACP and BP noted that they plan to request U.K. and U.S. Embassy assistance in communicating the importance of these activities and the need for GOC cooperation.

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Looking Ahead  
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15. (SBU) Despite the exclusion of civil society participants, formulation of the draft work plan represents an important step forward. Post will continue to monitor the VP implementation process at each stage and will continue to stress the importance of involving civil society actors early in the process. The Uribe administration has expressed strong support for implementation of VPs. As a result, obtaining GOC cooperation in risk assessment and review procedures is not a matter of GOC resistance or lack of political will. It is, rather, a question of overcoming legal and technical restrictions on information sharing that might be as simple as the development of a red-light/green-light system designed to safeguard protected or sensitive information.

WOOD